

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8667

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USUN NY 391

USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 4641

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR SY LE

SUBJ: JULY 16 SYRIAN MEDIA REPORT CALM IN BAALBEK

1. JULY 16 DAMASCUS MEDIA FOCUSED ON "CALM" PREVAILING
IN BAALBEK AND HERMIL. PRESS BANNERED: "STORY OF BATTLES
AND ALLEGED DESTRUCTION IN BAALBEK--TOWN IS CALM AND NO
FIGHTING HAS OCCURRED IN IT. INHABITANTS INVITE EVERYONE
TO COME AND SEE REALITY OF SITUATION. MUFTIOF BAALBEK--
'PRESIDENT ASAD SAFEGUARDS (PALESTINIAN) RESIDTANCE WITH
HIS HEART AND CONSCIENCE AND WITH ALL SYRIA'S EXISTENCE.'
PRESIDENT ASAD ADDRESSES MESSAGES TO NUMBER OF ARAB
PRESIDENTS ON SITUATION IN LEBANON. RIAD DISCUSSES
WORKING PLAN FOR COMING PHASE. WORK TO ENFORCE CEASE-
FIRE AND TO PREPARE CLIMATE FOR ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE.
PREPARATION FOR RESTORATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA
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AND PLO." AL-THAWRAH CORRESPONDENT WHO VISITED BAALBEK

CAPTIONED HIS REPORT: "TOUR IN CITY OF SUN. BAALBEK LIVES IN TOTAL CALMNESS. FAKE BATTLES OCCURRING IN MINDS OF PARTIES TO PLOT AND PARTISANS OF SEDITION." MORNING DAMASCUS RADIO CLAIMED THAT NO FIGHTING HAD TAKEN PLACE IN BAALBEK-HERMIL AREAS FOR PAST WEEK, AND THAT REPORTS OF BATTLES COMPRISED ATTEMPT TO DRIVE WEDGE BETWEEN SYRIA AND PALESTINIANS. ACCORDING TO RADIO, AUTHORITIES IN BAALBEK HAVE BEGUN COOPERATING WITH SYRIANS TO RESTORE WATER AND ELECTRICITY CUT AS RESULT OF SECTARIAN FIGHTING.

2. PRESS CITED NEWS AGENCY REPORTS OF RELATIVE CALMNESS IN LEBANON BROKEN BY INTERMITTENT EXCHANGES OF FIRE AROUND TRIPOLI AND SNIPING IN BEIRUT. HOWEVER, AL-BAATH NOTED AFP REPORT THAT IN BEIRUT "LOOTING, PLUNDERING, ABDUCTION AND MURDER ON INCREASE," AND ALSO GERMAN PRESS ARTICLE CLAIMING "FATAH DESIRES TAKE OVER POWER IN LEBANON."

3. DEPFONMIN SHAQRA CALLED IN AMBASSADORS FROM AURITANIA, ALGERIA, TUNISIA AND MOROCCO TO TRANSMIT MESSAGES TO THEIR CHIEFS OF STATE FROM ASAD CONCERNING SITUATION IN LEBANON. (COMMENT: APPARENTLY BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND DID NOT SEND SPECIAL ENVOYS TO THESE COUNTRIES TO EXPLAIN CURRENT PHASE OF SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON.) PRESS REPORTED THAT IN ADEN ALTERNATE NC MEMBER JAMIL SHAYA WAS RECEIVED BY PRIMIN TO DISCUSS LEBANESE SITUATION.

4. TISHRIIN EDITORIAL REITERATED POSITIVE VIEW OF SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON AND STRESSED SARG DESIRE TO RESTORE NORMAL RELATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS.

5. COMMENT:

DAMASCUS MEDIA STRIVING TO PLACE SYRIAN PACIFICATION OF BEKAA INTO MOST FAVORABLE LIGHT. ALL PAPERS CONTAINED PHOTOS OF LIFE GOING ON AS NORMAL IN BAALBEK, AND OF NEWSMEN VISITING ROMAN RUINS ALLEGEDLY DESTROYED IN CLASHES.

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